



Moving ministries forward, *together.*

Reflections on Stewardship by Laura Watson

Stewardship. What do you think of when you hear that word? In his book *Stewardshift*, Bob Sitze summarizes **stewardship** with these three points:

- Stewardship is a set of beliefs. Your beliefs center on God, not yourself: God's nature, God's will, God's gifts, God's presence
- Stewardship describes practices or behaviors. Your beliefs compel actions, reactions to God's gifts, and obedience to God's commands.
- Stewardship becomes an identity. Over time, your actions become habits, which, in turn, layer themselves over the core of your being: a servant of God.

Oftentimes in our churches, "stewardship" is thought of as what we do in October when we talk about money and are asked to make a commitment for the coming year, or to turn in a sheet indicating what ministries we'd like to be a part of and how we'll use our talents to support the life of the church. Clearly we're missing the mark if we think of "stewardship" only as something we do a few times a year, and not part of who we are as servants of God.

MMFA is experiencing our own "*stewardshift*" this year as we work to better serve our congregations in the area of stewardship. We have been listening to pastors and lay people, crunching data, exploring what other denominations do, and seeking feedback from Moravians around the country.

So....what have we come up with? First, this is what we believe about stewardship:

We are created in God's image to give.

Stewardship is a way of life in which we use God's resources at our disposal for God's purposes, recognizing that God's gifts are dynamic and designed to flow out of us. Stewardship is a commitment to becoming Christ-centered rather than self-centered, it is a sacred responsibility, and it is a joyful journey that brings us closer to who God is calling us to be.

Second, our goal is to work with pastors and congregations to discover, develop, strengthen, and renew their stewardship **ministries**. The Episcopal Network for Stewardship says, "Stewardship is all that we do with all we have, all the time", and we agree. By shifting to thinking of stewardship as a ministry, rather than a program or fund-drive, we can expand our understanding of it



Moving ministries forward, *together.*

and move closer to seeing how it is a part of everything we do, both at our churches and in our lives all the time.

As we help pastors and lay leaders, we ask these important questions:

1. What do you believe about stewardship at this church?
2. If we interviewed people as they left worship on Sunday, what would they say stewardship is at your church?
3. If we watched a movie of the life of the church, what would we see that's stewardship?
4. What does your stewardship accomplish day in and day out?
5. If we could fast-forward a year, and we were together and you said, "Our stewardship ministry is better than it was a year go", what will have happened to make that so?

We also lead discussion groups with members of the congregation to get their input about stewardship and how they live out their gifts through their community of faith. We find these conversations to be very helpful as churches seek to discern and how God is calling them to serve and to answer that call. Stewardship is a vital part of all we do and who we are, and a clear sense of what stewardship means in our churches is key to moving forward together.

We hope you will take a little time to reflect on and pray about your stewardship. How has God blessed you and how can you use those gifts to renew His world?

We also hope you'll let us know how we can help your church as it considers its stewardship. We no longer charge a fee for our stewardship services so that all our congregations can engage us. Over the course of the year, we will be adding additional resources on our website and developing stewardship workshops; we will offer those in the areas of:

- developing a year-round stewardship ministry
- narrative budgeting
- generational giving
- the church and the IRS
- estate and other gift planning

and more!

Let's move ministry forward together and continue on our joyful journey as followers of Christ who receive God's abundant blessings and never-ending grace, and are generous in response. What a gift it is to be His stewards!